



BE SURE TO REGISTER FOR THIS YEAR'S ANNUAL FALL CONFERENCE



The Department of Personnel and Administration will be holding its annual fall personnel conference this year on Friday, October 22 at the Arvada Center for the Arts and Humanities. **The conference will begin promptly at 8:00 am** with a morning plenary session that includes Ken Dawson from Risk Control Services. Conference check-in and morning refreshments begin at 7:30 am.

The theme of this year's conference is **Risk... What Risk?**, and it will feature internationally renowned author and speaker, Claire Raines, who will give an afternoon keynote address. Her most recent book

Beyond Generation X: A Practical Guide for Managers provides excellent tips, tools and techniques for managing an intergenerational workforce.

Risk...

What Risk?

Workshops are described on the registration form at the back of this issue. You can also register online at

www.colorado.gov/dpa/dhr.

The registration deadline is Friday, October 15.

For more information about the conference, please contact

Jacque Morley at jacque.morley@state.co.us.

BULLETIN NEWS BRIEFS

· The 2004 Performance Pay and Ratings Results are now available. Comparison information on the performance rating distribution between the four rating levels for the three years (2002, 2003, 2004) since the transition to performance pay is also available at www.colorado.gov/dpa/dhr.

· The corrected version of the September HealthLine is now available. The maximum benefits will remain at

their current 2004 levels. The issue contains the 2005 six-month plan year rates and plans and valuable information about the fiscal year change.

To learn more about these and other human resources, risk management, benefits, and C-SEAP policies and issues, go to www.colorado.gov/dpa/dhr ("Recent News").

KEYS TO CONFLICT RESOLUTION, PART II: REJECTING THE "PERSONALITY CONFLICT" SHORTHAND

JON RICHARD, PSYD
C-SEAP COUNSELOR

"It's a personality conflict. We'll never get along!"
"She's just the kind of person who pushes my buttons!"

Every workplace experiences conflicts among personnel. Some conflicts are valuable, leading to collaborative and creative resolution of professional challenges. Many conflicts, however, become enduring and interpersonally poisonous, alienating co-workers from each other and from the agency mission, fragmenting teams into factions, and becoming increasingly toxic to general morale and productivity.

In the May *Advisor*, we looked at the pervasiveness of conflict in the workplace, and the time and financial burdens associated with conflicts that fester or become entrenched. We discussed the first Key to Conflict Resolution - Separating the Topic from the Stake. In this article, we address the risks posed by the common concept of the "personality conflict" and identify ways to intervene for a positive outcome. This information may be useful to the person directly involved in the conflict, but is directed specifically at the supervisor or manager who may have to take a problem-solving facilitation role with the involved individuals.

"Personality conflict" is common conversational shorthand for the complexities of a poor relationship, so it's not surprising many an employee will explain his or her difficulties with a fellow employee or supervisor with those words. But the savvy manager, seeking to resolve conflicts and restore cooperation and collaboration in the work-group, should recognize that the circularity of the "personality conflict" concept is a potential trap for all concerned. For example, Bob doesn't like Paul "because we have a personality conflict." Why do they have a personality conflict? "Because we're just too different, we don't get along!" Why don't you get along? "Because...we have a personality conflict!" And so it goes, seemingly unsolvable and perpetual, and the frustrated supervisor or manager may be prone to ineffective shortcuts ("Just work it out!"), while the involved employees become increasingly polarized and their fellow employees increasingly uncomfortable.

The antidote is relatively simple, but requires an investment of unwavering persistence by the person facilitating resolution of the dispute:

- o Do not allow either party to use the "personality conflict" explanation without firmly rejecting it.
- o Make it clear that "personality" is a label for the judgments we make about people based on what we observe them doing or not doing. Personality labels are umbrella terms for our assessments of others' behaviors, but personality labels are too general to be helpful.
- o Emphasize that the conflict can and will be solved by examining specific changes that each party may request of the other. What, specifically, has each party done (or failed to do) that has contributed to the breach, and what can each party change in his or her behavior (not "personality") to improve the relationship?

It is only this path that allows the manager-as-mediator to steer the conflict resolution process away from the murkiness and circularity of personal styles and preferences, and instead toward shared goals (mutually respectful and cooperative behavior, a more tolerable working environment) and productive negotiation. Typically, the discussion will intermittently regress back to personality labels and generalizations (e.g., "He's too much of a control-freak" or "She's just unfriendly"). Each time, the facilitator should label the drift ("that's a label, and it's too general") and steer the discussion back to specific behavioral incidents that require resolution and identified goals for an effective working relationship.

In many cases of conflict, effective resolution is greatly enhanced by use of the two keys discussed to date: *Separating Topic from Stake and Rejecting the "Personality Conflict" Shorthand*. Some conflicts, however, will resist even the best in-house attempts at resolution. When that occurs, remember that C-SEAP is available as a source of skilled, neutral, non-binding, cost-free facilitation of conflict resolution between individuals or within teams.

To consult with a staff member on issues of workplace conflict, or any other workplace challenges, contact C-SEAP at 303-866-4314.

DUAL RESPONSIBILITIES: WORK AND ELDERCARE, PART I

BY LINDA POUNDS, LICENSED MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPIST
C-SEAP COUNSELOR

Employees who are providing care or overseeing care for aging parents have a difficult task in remaining productive at work and effective in their personal lives. While the personal demands placed upon employees often increase as their parents age, the amount of time available to meet those demands remains the same. It is at this intersection that many workers begin to feel high levels of stress. Along with the impact of increased personal stress, there are important financial considerations for the workplace. A 1999 study by Metropolitan Life Insurance estimates workplace losses at \$11-29 billion per year in the United States due to employee absenteeism, lack of productivity and turnover rates as employees attempt to care for their aging parents.

Family conflict, financial worries and unclear options for care giving present emotional stress for employees and their families. Take "Michelle" for example: Michelle is a 43 year old supervisor. She is married and has a son in high school. During a recent staff meeting, she was interrupted by a phone call from her mother's physician in Boston. Due to a fall the previous night, her mother's hip was fractured and would need immediate surgery. Rehabilitation would require two to three months of physical therapy in a nursing facility in Boston. The physician noted that Michelle's mother repeatedly states, "I can't afford all of this," and worries that "there is no one to take care of my dog." Michelle's two brothers, who live in Boston, have expressed little interest in their mother and are "checked out," according to Michelle.

Supervising a work group of 25 employees in an ever changing department, Michelle feels overwhelmed much of the time. And, now, "this." After her return from Boston, Michelle began to spend increased amounts of work time on the telephone trying to manage her mother's care. She used sick leave twice in two weeks due to severe headaches and wonders if she will need to quit her job in order to care for her mother.

While quitting work is one approach to managing multiple personal and work responsibilities, it is often not the best answer. There are ways to manage both work and eldercare responsibilities.

Michelle might begin by sharing responsibilities. Even though she considers her siblings to have little interest in their mother, that may be inaccurate. Michelle should call her siblings and discuss the current situation. It is possible that her siblings are very interested in their mother's care and that Michelle has misinterpreted their lack of communication. It may be that Michelle's siblings are truly not interested in assisting with their mother's care. In either case, it will be a critical first step for Michelle to understand what family resources may be available to help with her mother's care.

If her siblings are willing to assist with care, Michelle can ask each sibling what role they are most comfortable/able to provide. Michelle's older brother may be in a position to visit mom in the hospital and help with bringing personal belongings to the nursing home or rehabilitation center where their mother will begin recovery. Michelle's younger brother may help by visiting mom, consulting with her physicians and talking with her about changes needed for her return home. Perhaps Michelle can arrange a visit to spend time with her mother and begin conversations around future care needs, financial implications and desires her mother may have around those issues. Everyone should provide emotional support to Michelle's mother. This event may mark a significant change in her formerly independent lifestyle and may create fear and confusion around the future.

It will be important for Michelle to begin building community resources (this becomes even more critical if her siblings are unwilling to assist with care). She should search for Boston area agencies that support families with eldercare issues and contact them as soon as possible. If her mother has neighbors or other friends who have offered assistance, now is the time to enlist their help. A neighbor might be willing to care for her mother's dog, pick up her mail or make sure plants are watered.

Another option for families who provide long-distance care is to hire eldercare managers who help with arranging and monitoring parents' needs. These services can be expensive, but provide the family caregiver with a built-in community resource as well as assistance with placement of in-home or out-of-home services and the necessary monitoring of those services. Eldercare managers can provide invaluable piece-of-mind for distant family members.

After one phone call, Michelle suddenly joined the group of 14 million employed caregivers currently providing care, or overseeing care, for their elderly parents. She learned that managing care at a distance is difficult but with some assistance it could be done. Now, if Michelle is asked for advice she tells her coworkers, "Do not wait until there is a crisis to make a plan. Make a plan now for what you and other family members will do if your parents have a need for more assistance with daily living." Taking Michelle's advice, we will consider what is needed in planning for a parent's care in Part II of Dual Responsibilities: Work and Eldercare.

The Colorado State Employee Assistance Program is now offering a class which provides information and resources around planning for, or currently providing, eldercare while working. Consider scheduling a class for your work group or yourself. Call C-SEAP at 303-866-4314 to schedule a class.

Course Schedule

2004 – 2005

SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY
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COLORADO SUPERVISORY CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

\$725.00

		Denver November 2,4,9,16,23		Denver January 2005 10-14			Denver April 5,12,19,26 & May 3	
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COLORADO LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

\$725.00

	Denver October 5,12,19,21,26							Denver May 10,17,24,26,31
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THE RULES FOR SUPERVISORS AND MANAGERS

\$150.00

	Denver October 13	Denver November 3		Denver January 18	Denver February 2		Denver April 6	
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PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE

\$150.00

	Denver October 14	Denver November 19		Denver January 25	Denver February 9		Denver April 7	
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COLORADO STATE MEDIATION PROGRAM

\$725.00

					Denver February 3,4,10,11,18		Denver April 14,15,21,22,29	
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EMPLOYMENT LAW UPDATE SEMINAR

\$350.00

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Schedule to be Announced

INTRODUCTION TO COLORADO CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

\$150.00

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Schedule to be Announced



DPA

Professional



Development Center

1313 Sherman Street

Denver, Co 80203

Phone: 303-866-2439

Fax: 303-866-2021

Email: carolyn.gable@state.co.us



2004 DPA Fall Conference

October 22

7:30 am – 4:00 pm

The Arvada Center for the Arts & Humanities

Join us for a day of dynamic speakers and exciting workshops. Learn the many ways our decisions – or lack thereof – can affect the bottom line, and learn concrete ways to mitigate the potential for loss.

Internationally renowned author and speaker, Claire Raines, will give the keynote address. Her most recent book *Beyond Generation X: A Practical Guide for Managers* provides excellent tips, tools and techniques for managing an intergenerational workforce.

REGISTRATION FORM

NAME: _____

DEPARTMENT/DIVISION: _____

PHONE: _____ FAX: _____

EMAIL: _____

VEGETARIAN LUNCH: _____

(Please indicate if you would prefer a vegetarian lunch.
Thank you.)

COST IS ONLY \$40.00 PER PERSON
(INCLUDES ALL CONFERENCE MATERIALS & LUNCH)

If paying with an IT Document through COFRS, send a copy of the IT YYY document set up to agency AQF. Fax to 303-866-2021 and please be sure to provide the Accounting Contact at your department and his or her phone number.

ACCOUNTING CONTACT: _____

PHONE: _____

If paying by check, please make your check payable to State of Colorado, and mail directly to:

Department of Personnel & Administration
Division of Human Resources – Risk Management
1313 Sherman, Rm 122
Denver, CO 80203
Attn: Judi Karg

PAYMENT IS DUE PRIOR TO CONFERENCE

CREDIT CARDS ARE NOT ACCEPTED

CANCELLATIONS NOT ACCEPTED AFTER OCT 13

DEPARTMENT WILL BE CHARGED FOR NO SHOWS

REGISTER ONLINE AT WWW.COLORADO.GOV/DPA/DHR

Please indicate which workshop you will attend in each session:

SESSION I

A. RESOLVING CONFLICT: MOCK SETTLEMENT MEDIATION

Joe Epstein of Conflict Resolution Services will take you through a mock mediation meeting that focuses on settlement of a state liability claim. Learn what to expect from the other party and opposing counsel when you become involved in settlement negotiations.

B. KEEPING UP ON WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Representatives of Pinnacol will present new legal issues facing employers and injured parties and provide other current information related to management of claims.

C. Domestic Violence & The Workplace

Ellen Stein Wallace, Executive Director of SafeHouse Denver, will provide powerful insights on how the effects of domestic violence ripple out from the home and come into the workplace.

SESSION II

A. CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

CDOT Public Information Officer Stacey Stegman will lead this workshop about how to communicate in the face of a difficult situation. What do you say? When do you say it? and Why?

B. The Mysterious "Black Boxes"

Manufacturers are installing recording devices in most new vehicles, an issue of which most motorists are unaware. Who is able to obtain the information and how can it be used? Is this a violation of a driver's right to privacy and are there other issues to consider?

C. USING HEALTH BENEFITS WISELY

Dr. Lisa Latts of Anthem will present on the growing trend in the health care industry toward consumer-driven products, and how health care consumers can make better decisions about their benefits.

SESSION III

A. THE MUMMY'S CURSE

Mold is a "growing" concern for property owners and managers and can present health hazards to individuals. Get the details on insurance coverage, prevention techniques, and see a live "mold dog" in action.

B. Employee Issues and Risk Minimization

Make the right choices early and avoid litigation. Jane Christman, Fred Haines, and Becky Earnheart of the Attorney General's office will provide critical information about how to safeguard yourself and your agency in handling sensitive employee issues..

C. THREAT ASSESSMENT TEAMS

C-SEAP Counselor Jon Richard, PsyD., will offer participants tangible ways to recognize potential employee threats and create the infrastructure to help protect your organization and its employees.